

Questions from the audience during the Scientific Research-Based
Interventions (SRBI) and Paraprofessionals Panel
SERC Paraprofessional Conference on October 29, 2009

1. Q: Are there timelines for interventions? (Tier II, III)
A: Interventions are short term (e.g., 8 to 20 weeks) and remain part of the general education system. These interventions are supplemental to the core academic instruction and behavioral supports that are part of Tier I.

2. Q: Would you continue an intervention once growth is evidenced after two weeks?
A: Yes, if growth is evidenced (indicating that the intervention is working), an intervention should continue. Two weeks would not be sufficient time to make a decision to remove an intervention, whether making progress or not. Teachers would determine if the level of growth and amount of time spent on an intervention requires a change. Progress on interventions should be considered relevant to a grade-level standard or benchmark.

3. Q: Who is managing the progress monitoring? (literacy, math, behavior)
A: Certified staff should manage the process of progress monitoring.

4. Q: Should districts give paraprofessionals the *Connecticut Guidelines for Training and Support of Paraprofessionals, Working with Students Birth to 21*?
A: The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) endorsed and published this guideline document to inform and guide district personnel in the important factors to consider in the use of paraprofessionals, specifically their effective use. It also clarifies the role of the paraprofessional as it is related to instruction. A hard copy of the guidelines was mailed to all special education supervisors in the spring of 2008. An electronic copy was e-mailed to each district contact for paraprofessional issues in the spring of 2008. The guidelines are accessible online: www.ct.gov/sde/para-cali. The department realizes that school budgets are limited, and districts might not be able to make copies available to all staff. The department's expectation was that districts would make their teachers, paraprofessionals and administrators aware of the guidelines and direct them on how to access the documents online.

5. Q: Are paraprofessionals teachers' assistants or teacher resources?
A: Paraprofessionals serve in a variety of capacities according to student needs. Connecticut's definition of a paraprofessional follows: An employee who assists teachers and/or other professional educators or therapists in the delivery of instructional and related services to students. The paraprofessional works under the direct supervision of the teacher or other certified or licensed professional. The ultimate responsibility for the design, implementation and evaluation of instructional programs, including assessment of students' progress, is a collaborative effort of certified and licensed staff.

6. Q: Where do you find time especially at the secondary level to get the information you need from the general and special education teacher to meet the needs of the students?

A: It is always difficult to find time for paraprofessionals and teachers to meet at the secondary level. Below are suggestions on how time can be found in the school day to allow teachers and paraprofessionals to meet:

- establish a firm 15 minute meeting time for each day;
- set aside a longer (45 minute to 60 minute) meeting time for each week;
- determine a monthly meeting to discuss progress of individual students;
- meet when students do not need supports (such as during lunch, recess or special-areas classes);
- establish a communication notebook to be used by the teacher and paraprofessional;
- use e-mail as a way to efficiently check in each day or to answer burning questions;
- maximize time when scheduling preparation times and lunch breaks; and
- floating substitutes to provide release time for teachers and paraprofessionals.

7. Q: How do paraprofessionals fit into the SRBI process?

A: The CSDE is in the process of developing resources to help districts identify appropriate roles for paraprofessionals in the SRBI process. Collaboration among all school staff ensures positive learning experiences and outcomes for struggling students whose needs are identified early. As a paraprofessional, you can be a valuable part of SRBI teams by assisting classroom teachers and special educators with screening, assisting teachers with benchmarking and progress monitoring assessments, recording observations of behavior and learning strategies, entering assessment data into a management system, serving as a member of the intervention team, collaborating with teachers to provide support for students, implementing teacher planned interventions under the direct supervision of a certified teacher and after completing specialized training, and participating in schoolwide professional development.

8. Q: What data do you want us (paraprofessionals) to collect? Is it different for each student?

A: Collection of data on learner activity is listed in the 10 examples of appropriate and effective utilization of paraprofessionals, which can be found in the *Connecticut Guidelines for Training and Support of Paraprofessionals, Working with Students Birth to 21*. Paraprofessionals may assist in the collection of data on learner activity as designed by teacher/provider. Examples of this data would be: student behavior and record keeping of student performance on functional (informal) assessment instrument developed by teachers/providers.

9. Q: Is there an awareness of the enormous differences in the work paraprofessionals are asked to do at the Pre-K level vs. elementary vs. secondary? How do we get the training we need if and when we are reassigned? Should guidelines be developed further for each instructional level?

A: Yes, there is an awareness of the differences in work of paraprofessionals working at different grade levels. There is also an awareness of the different levels of experience and knowledge among these paraprofessionals. For this reason, the CSDE adopted the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals Model (1999) as a framework for articulating key competencies for Connecticut paraprofessionals. This model is designed to assist districts and programs in identifying responsibilities of paraprofessionals and then delineates the knowledge and skills necessary for performing these duties. The model is intended to be used as a guide and should be modified to meet the unique needs of a school district or program. The model defines six primary areas of responsibilities for paraprofessionals and is organized to define three levels of responsibilities, which are based on paraprofessionals' training, experience and job requirements. The knowledge and skills are intended for use as a guide in training paraprofessionals. The model is included in the *Connecticut Guidelines for Training and Support of Paraprofessionals, Working with Students Birth to 21*.

10. Q: What type of training are you suggesting districts give to the paraprofessionals specific to SRBI?

A: First, an overview of SRBI, roles of paraprofessionals and teachers in the instructional process, intervention training and data collection.

11. Q: Will SRBI result in less students being identified as Learning Disabled?

A: That is not the intent of SRBI. As a result of SRBI, a decrease may or may not occur.

12. If SRBI is a process to get to an Individualized Education Programs (IEP), do we have a student go through all three tiers and then be tested?

A: SRBI is not a process to get to an IEP. SRBI is a framework for school improvement. It is a model of prevention, meaning that students are provided a continuum of supports based on their needs. When the continuum is in place, student needs are addressed early and prevented from becoming exacerbated by repeated failure.